

## EMF-CEEMET Work programme:

22/11/2010, C&E Co-Chairmen Proposal

---

International competitiveness for European industry and how to handle the duality between company flexibility needs and the social and employment security for employees are two focuses for the C&E workgroup.

The workgroup will search to find a realistic and common view as a platform for further discussions. The different experiences of member states and from other relevant countries are important input to this process.

Initially, the C&E workgroup will address the following fields of interest:

### Research & Innovation

Research and development is becoming more and more important to underpin the competitiveness of both companies and countries. The social partners have a joint interest in supporting all types of activities that help the European industry to develop its products, its processes and its services, in a sustainable and competitive way. They underline the importance of innovation in its broader sense including the contribution of innovative workplace practices (e.g. training, teamwork, worker participation etc.) to company performance.

The editing group proposes that the C&E group forms within itself a small ad hoc group that can identify activities for joint efforts towards the European Union, taking the EU 2020 Strategy and the Commission proposals on an integrated industrial policy into account. Further, the work group could also sample good practices of joint activities in the member states. The group should present its findings at a later C&E meeting.

### Managing an ageing workforce and meeting the demographic challenge

Industry, as other sectors, has to meet the challenge of a long-term supply of competence. Lifelong learning, suitable working conditions for older workers, recruitment of new workers, a good work environment and the need for social security for elderly workers, creating viable pension systems, are important aspects on how to tackle this problem.

Along with those already employed, the main groups contributing to competence supply are: young people entering work life after having graduated from vocational training or school. Secondly, adults coming from other sectors. The third (and largest) group are those who had earlier experience from industry, but through redundancies, or voluntarily, have left their job.

There is also a fourth group that sometimes is substantial in numbers, though due to close legislation. They are workers coming from other countries, within or from outside the European Union.

Each group calls for its own set of measures to support a proper integration in industry. The editing group proposes that CEEMET and EMF discuss this issue further with the E&T work group to establish what group does what. After such clarification the issue should be taken up on a later C&E meeting.

### Adaptability

For some time the issue of how to balance company needs for flexibility with employees' needs for security has been discussed under the heading of flexicurity. Structural change will continue to be a permanent aspect of industrial development. The same is and will continue to be true as regards business cycles and recurring deep economic shocks. It is essential that companies and workers are able to meet these challenges. This stresses the need for rules on employment which makes it possible for the companies to adapt and be flexible when needed. This involves both forms of employment, rules on redundancy and creating ways of facilitating company level internal strategies such as more flexible ways of regulating working hours.

The topic also underlines the duality between the adaptability to changes and the existence of a social platform of education, social security and workers rights.

The social partners agree on the general need for all workers to have decent basic conditions and arrangements for their social security to balance the flexibility needed for employers in an increasingly internationalised and globalised economy. In the framework of the Social Dialogue there is a common interest to learn more about the practice in this field. The editing group proposes a discussion that focuses on how the social partners can build further trust that supports a competitive and good balance between social security and workers mobility.

### Flexible forms of work, atypical forms of work and so called precarious work

The social partners have noted that there is an ongoing discussion on atypical forms of employment. They acknowledge that flexible forms of work, such as temporary work, can contribute to job creation and a smooth functioning of the labour market and are tools for companies to handle fluctuations in the market. The social partners furthermore note that there is a claim that atypical forms of employment are on the rise. At the same time it is apparent that the extent to which atypical forms of employment is used varies significantly between the member states and between sectors.

The term "precarious work" has come into use among stakeholders in Europe. The term does not have an agreed meaning and it is thus not clear what the concept covers and how it differs from the relatively clearly defined concept of atypical forms of employment.

The editing group proposes a further discussion on these subjects in the C&E group, with a focus on gathering information on to what extent flexible or atypical forms of work is used in the sectors concerned. Furthermore, on the causes behind the use of other forms of employment arrangements than full time open-ended contracts, as well as the problems that could arise from this. The results from this discussion could be a useful contribution to the ongoing European discussion on the area concerned.